United Nations A/C.2/58/SR.12

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session
Official Records

Distr.: General
4 May 2004
English
Original: French

Second Committee

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 16 October 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
later: Ms. Zubčević (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Croatia)

Contents

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development

(a) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996–2005

(b) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

(c) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*)

(e) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

(f) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

(g) Sustainable mountain development

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

03-56450 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development

(a) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996–2005 (A/58/204)

(b) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/58/158)

(c) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/58/191)

(e) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/58/277)

(f) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (A/58/308)

(g) Sustainable mountain development (A/58/134)

1. **Ms. Waller-Hunter** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) introduced the report on the Outcome of the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (A/58/308), held in New Delhi in October and November 2002. She recalled that following the Conference, she had informed the Committee that the outcome reflected the transitional character of the current situation in the climate area – an important transition from negotiations to implementation. She would like to follow up on that observation and provide information on four areas of work of the Conference, namely, the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, the Clean Development Mechanism, collaboration among the three "Rio" conventions and support to the least developed countries.

2. She had expected that the Kyoto Protocol would enter into force in 2003, but that had not been the case. At the moment, 119 Parties had ratified the Protocol, including developed countries accounting for 44 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions. The threshold set for the entry into force of the instrument was 55 per cent. As evidence was mounting that the adverse impacts of climate change would undermine national and international efforts at achieving sustainable development, the need for vigorous national and international action in dealing with climate change was obvious. She hoped that the Conference of the Parties would be guided by that sense of urgency at its ninth session, to be held in Milan in December 2003.

3. She was pleased at the progress made towards setting up the Clean Development Mechanism. Its Executive Board had advanced the process to the point where project activities could be registered. The Board had developed operational procedures, approved baseline and monitoring methodologies, and the accreditation procedures for operational entities that would validate projects and certify emission reductions. Twenty Parties had already identified their designated national authorities that would endorse projects. Promising areas for such projects identified so far included landfill gas capture and flaring, incineration of hydrofluorocarbon waste streams, fuel switching and biopower from rice husk.

4. The Conference of the Parties had stressed the need for enhanced collaboration between the Rio conventions, i.e., the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The aim was to avoid duplication of efforts, strengthen joint action and use available resources more efficiently. Enhancing such collaboration had also been noted in the conclusions and decisions of the governing bodies of the other Rio conventions.

5. The secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had established a Joint Liaison Group comprising the Executive Secretaries and officers of the subsidiary bodies of the three conventions. The Group had identified major cross-cutting thematic areas for synergistic activities, including technology development and transfer, education and outreach, research and systematic observation, impacts and adaptation, capacity building and reporting. Closer links were being considered between national action programmes under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and national adaptation programmes of action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A common information strategy was being developed, and a joint calendar of relevant events had been posted on the Web sites of the three conventions.

In addition, the need to strengthen coordination among national focal points had been emphasized.

6. The Convention secretariat had a major process to respond to the specific needs of least developed countries that were preparing their national adaptation programmes of action using resources from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), with the support of the implementing agencies of GEF and the advice of the LDC Expert Group. The national adaptation programmes of action brought together existing analyses on the impacts of climate change, integrated adaptation considerations into sustainable development priorities and strategies and identified prioritized project profiles of actions they wished to undertake that would address their urgent and immediate needs in adapting to climate change.

7. **Mr. Zedan** (Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity) introduced the note of the Secretary-General on the Convention on Biological Diversity (A/58/191). The current year marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention which, with 187 Parties, had nearly attained universal coverage. The Parties to the Convention had adopted a number of programmes covering the main biomes, forests and biological diversity of cultivated land, as well as the biological diversity of coastal and marine areas, inland waters and arid lands, and they were committed to ensuring their success. Many of the measures were already being implemented. In addition, the financial mechanism of the Convention, which had been placed under the responsibility of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), had provided approximately US$1.6 million to the developing countries in order to enable them to carry out their biodiversity projects. It had obtained an additional US$1.6 million under cofinancing arrangements.

8. Perceptions about biological diversity had changed significantly, so that it was now widely considered an essential element of sustainable development programmes and the fight against poverty. The current year had been a productive one for the Convention. The report that was before the Committee (A/58/191) showed the outcome of the efforts carried out under the Convention since the World Summit on Sustainable Development in order to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

9. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety had entered into force on 11 September 2003. The Protocol was the first legally binding instrument on the transboundary movement of living modified organisms obtained through the use of biotechnology which could have a harmful effect on the environment, including on human health. The Protocol had been ratified by 64 Parties. The first Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol would be held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004, immediately after the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The deadline for becoming a Party to the Protocol and be able to participate in decision making at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties was 25 November. That first meeting would consider essential questions relating to the implementation of the Protocol, liability and redress, documentation relating to transboundary movements of living modified organisms and the decision procedure.

10. In follow up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, an intersessional meeting of the Parties to the Convention had been held in Montreal, Canada, shortly after the Summit, to consider the outcome of the Summit. The participants in the intersessional meeting had made some general recommendations that would be discussed at the next Conference of the Parties. They had recommended that, with the exception of island biodiversity, no new issues should be taken up for in-depth consideration. Instead, the focus should be on reviewing ongoing programmes of work to assess progress and to introduce the necessary adjustments and refinements as appropriate. They had also recommended a review of progress in the achievement of the target set at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, namely, to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss. In addition, the Conference of the Parties was to adopt a multi-year programme of work up to 2010.

11. The participants in the intersessional meeting had also discussed issues arising from the World Summit on Sustainable Development, including hot spots, ecological networks and corridors. In so doing, they had borne in mind the need to establish a consistent linkage between initiatives taken in the context of the Convention and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. They had recommended the creation of a world partnership on biodiversity with a view to ensuring collaboration among all stakeholders

and coordinating their action, so as to achieve the main objective in the area of biological diversity. In that regard, he pointed out that there was no directive regarding the follow-up and appraisal of progress made towards that objective. The Convention secretariat, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as non-governmental organizations, had organized a meeting for the purpose of studying that question and drawing up recommendations. In conclusion, he stressed that the target established at the World Summit on Sustainable Development could not be achieved without strengthened cooperation, without an increase in resources for developing countries and without coordination and cooperation actions.

12. **Ms. McAskie** (Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/58/277), which provided an overview of the activities and partnerships of the previous year, including progress made towards fulfilment of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation with regard to risk assessment and disaster and vulnerability reduction. Pursuant to General Assembly decision 57/547, the report also dealt with the negative impacts of extreme weather events and associated natural disasters on vulnerable countries, as well as the relationship between climate change adaptation plans and disaster reduction.

13. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction was at the centre of United Nations actions aimed at dealing with disasters that continued to devastate many countries and hinder their development. The international community could not avoid addressing the challenge of reducing human, economic and ecological losses caused by natural disasters. On average, well over 200 million people were hit by natural disasters every year. However, in 2002, 600 million people had been affected by over 500 disasters costing US$55 billion worth of direct damage, especially that caused by the floods in Europe. During the first half of 2003, thousands of people had lost their lives and enormous financial loss had been caused by natural disasters, including the earthquakes in Algeria, China and Turkey; the floods in Argentina, Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka; and the heat waves in South Asia and southern Europe.

14. It was encouraging to note that during the past year, the Strategy had been used more often by United Nations agencies and by governments to guide their commitments and their action. Disaster reduction programmes at the regional level had strengthened the exchange of information among the stakeholders and had led to more consistent policies being adopted. Progress had been particularly significant in Africa, with the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the support of United Nations agencies and African subregional organizations.

15. In that regard, she pointed out that climatic risk reduction was based on three principles: firstly, disasters happened because of the vulnerability of societies to natural disasters; secondly, that vulnerability was aggravated by development; thirdly, the impact of disasters could be mitigated by policies and measures for reducing risk and vulnerability. When those principles were viewed as a whole, disaster prevention became an integral part of the development process, both as an objective and as a tool. If vulnerability and climatic risk were to be reduced, a systematic approach would be needed that would include assessing and monitoring risk factors (both hazards and human vulnerability), taking steps to raise awareness of risks while at the same time preventing them, and supporting such activities through policies, legislation and administrative processes at the local, national and international levels. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Strategy secretariat were working together to integrate into a conceptual framework the different aspects that needed to be taken into account in promoting disaster risk reduction. A compilation of practical experiences in the area of climatic risk prevention had been published in the magazine ISDR Living with Risk, a revised version of which would be published in late 2003.

16. Summarizing the conclusions and recommendations included in the report, she pointed out, firstly, that on the issue of extreme weather events and disaster reduction, although the primary cause of present disaster trends was vulnerability and not global warming, the two issues were intimately linked and must be dealt with in an integrated manner. Interaction and coordination among the development, disaster risk management and climate communities were essential in efforts to identify and reduce current and future climatic risks. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction provided the framework for collaboration on

the development of methodologies to systematically characterize, measure, assess and respond to weather-related disasters, hazards and vulnerabilities at the local, national, regional and international levels.

17. Secondly, Member States and international organizations needed to ensure that development plans and poverty reduction strategies included disaster risk assessment as an integral component and increase their investments to reduce risk and vulnerability if development gains were not to be wiped out, in particular in the least developed countries and small island developing States. Natural and technological hazards, along with the increasing threat of HIV/AIDS, other epidemics and complex emergencies, needed to be tackled through common approaches and team efforts by the international community if development goals were to be achieved.

18. Thirdly, the review of the 1994 Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action was expected to show a need to increase the commitment to disaster reduction. The Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction would provide an opportunity for Member States and expert institutions to discuss and adopt a set of principles and substantive activities for years to come, thus contributing to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and other United Nations development objectives. At its seventh meeting in April 2003, the Task Force had welcomed and endorsed the offer made by Japan to host such a conference in Kobe. Member States were encouraged to endorse the convening of the Conference with the principal objectives of identifying achievements and gaps to be addressed and of setting the vision and recommendations for the future work of the Strategy and for the implementation of disaster reduction at all levels. She also drew attention to the Second International Conference on Early Warning, to be held in Bonn from 16 to 18 October.

19. Fourthly, the report stressed that the Task Force was becoming a genuine forum for dialogue within the United Nations which would play a part in facilitating coordination and would provide strategic orientation on disaster-reduction issues. The Task Force appeared to be on the way to becoming the centre of a much broader network in the area of disaster reduction. To that end, the profile of Task Force meetings must be further raised, including through the organization of sessions at which member organizations and entities should be represented at the highest level. The next meeting of the Task Force would be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 6 November 2003. At the same time, the chair of the Task Force should continue to ensure that its working groups constituted ad hoc arrangements with clearly defined objectives and schedules, and that their activities were in line with the overall mandate and objectives of the Task Force.

20. Finally, with regard to resources, she referred to the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Organization (A/58/1, para. 98), which stated that the efforts of the United Nations to reduce the impact of natural hazards had been undermined by limited funding. Donors funding humanitarian operations were reluctant to allocate funds for long-term activities, and as far as development was concerned, donors had not yet assumed sufficient responsibility for such activities. The Strategy secretariat should continue to be strengthened, and disaster reduction should be considered as a part of the core functions of the United Nations. A more stable and predictable base of financial resources was required if the Strategy secretariat was to effectively meet the growing needs of Member States. She hoped that Member States would support the process of consolidation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as an essential instrument for sustainable development and to provide adequate resources to the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction.

21. **Mr. Shearer** (Deputy Chief, Energy and Transport Branch, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996–2005 (A/58/164), said that concerns over five issues had strengthened the motivation to increase the use of new and renewable sources of energy: poverty elimination, climate change, localized pollution, increased energy demand and eventual fossil-fuel depletion. Those concerns had been discussed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and were crucial to its Plan of Implementation.

22. The report also referred to the fact that UNESCO, as the initiator of the World Solar Programme, was assisting the task force established to restructure the World Solar Commission, which would be renamed the World Commission on Renewable Energy.

23. The important international programmes described in the report were an indication of the interest in the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy. Support for such activities had grown significantly over the past two years, in particular as a result of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Among the important activities carried out in follow up to the World Summit were the creation of partnerships for sustainable development, the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition and the decision by the Government of Germany to host the International Conference for Renewable Energy in Bonn in June 2004. The decision by the Commission on Sustainable Development to focus on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change would make it possible to further pursue the study of development and use of new and renewable sources of energy.

24. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Director, FAO Liaison Office with the United Nations), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the International Year of Mountains, 2002 (A/58/134), said that thanks to a proposal by Kyrgyzstan, with the strong support of several members of the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly had proclaimed 2002 as the International Year of Mountains. The commitment of all concerned had made the International Year a great success at the national, regional and international levels. A large-scale communications programme had been put underway with a view to sharing information, encouraging research and promoting long-term action in mountain regions. Effecting real change in mountain regions was now a priority for every country in the world.

25. Before 2002, many people had asked why mountains should be celebrated with an international year and why they played a vital role. Thanks to the vision that had been presented and the enthusiasm displayed throughout the International Year, a network of organizations and individuals understood the need to protect the biological diversity of mountains, to ensure that measures and laws targeting mountain people were equitable and to implement strategies to foster sustainable development of mountain regions.

26. It was widely recognized that mountains were a source of freshwater for half the world's population and that they gave shelter to the genetic diversity that helped feed the planet. The hazards to which mountain environments were exposed were well known, whether climate change, damaging mining operations, ecologically unsound agricultural practices or urbanization. Many people were aware of the fact that an excessive share of the 800 million people who were chronically undernourished lived in mountain regions. And that armed conflict represented the greatest threat to the life and the livelihood of mountain peoples suffering from hunger and poverty.

27. The success of the International Year of Mountains had been due to the clearness of vision and the dynamism of the countries as well as to the initiatives they had undertaken. By the end of 2002, that enthusiasm had been evident in the 78 national committees or similar mechanisms that had been established for observance of the Year.

28. During the International Year of Mountains, the national mechanisms had coordinated a wide variety of activities to generate awareness and had launched programmes and projects and organized events at all levels, in order to celebrate mountains and mountain people and to promote the sustainable development of mountains. Once the International Year was over, the national committees had become permanent bodies devoted to transforming the message into specific sustainable programmes at the national level and to finding sustainable solutions to the problems of mountain regions. To that end, they participated in regional efforts to protect mountain systems. They worked to ensure that mountains and the needs of mountain people were prominent on the national agenda, and they designed, developed and implemented national strategies, measures and legislation to meet the needs, priorities and special circumstances of mountain regions. The countries were making sure that the International Year would be more than just a successful communications campaign and that it would really make a difference.

29. Whether people lived at sea level or at a high altitude, mountains played a fundamental role in their health and well-being. No matter where they lived, there had never been a better opportunity to contribute to change in the mountain regions of the whole world.

30. In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, governments, United Nations agencies and international organizations had launched the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions to reinforce

the alliance of organizations and countries that were committed to implementing the provisions of chapter 13 of Agenda 21 and paragraph 42 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In October 2003, 38 countries, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 38 organizations representing large groups had joined the Partnership, which had a total of 90 members.

31. The International Partnership was a flexible and diverse alliance the goal of which was to address the complexity, diversity and magnitude of mountain issues and to strengthen cooperation between all stakeholders. It was an open alliance that would encourage dynamic collaboration and help build new bonds and strengthen existing ones, in order to achieve common goals. It would encourage alliances between local, national and global initiatives designed to foster the sustainable development of mountain regions. It would fight poverty in mountain regions through specific programmes and projects.

32. In 2002, the International Partnership had been strongly endorsed in the Bishkek Mountain Platform, adopted at the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, held in November 2002. By 2003, interest in the Partnership had grown at all levels. In early October 2003, the first global meeting of members of the International Partnership, a high-level meeting hosted by the Italian Government, had been held in Merano, Italy.

33. The strong links between mountains and water had been addressed by many countries in the region in 2002 and were set to continue to be addressed in 2003, which had been proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year of Freshwater. The Food and Agriculture Organization noted with satisfaction that one of the outcomes of the International Year of Mountains had been the celebration of the first International Mountain Day, 11 December 2003, the theme of which had been "Mountains – Source of Freshwater". That theme established the link between the International Year of Mountains and the International Year of Freshwater. Each day, one of every two people drank water that came from mountains. Each day too, deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, urban sprawl and global warming took their toll on mountain watersheds. What would happen when the water stopped flowing? By taking care of the world's mountains, people could help to ensure the long-term survival of all that was connected to them, including themselves. In conclusion, she encouraged Member States to examine the observations, recommendations and proposals included in the Secretary-General's note, which could guide the international community in taking concerted action to protect fragile mountain ecosystems and improve the livelihoods of mountain people.

34. **Mr. Amin** (Director, New York Office, United Nations Environment Programme) introduced the report on the twenty-second session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (A/58/25). The intergovernmental meeting had provided the international community with its first opportunity to give specific content to the message of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, which depended on implementation. Thus, implementation had been a central theme in all the Council's discussions and had been echoed in each of its responses to the many tasks that had been entrusted to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Furthermore, UNEP had recently become a full member of the United Nations Development Group and was holding talks with the United Nations Development Programme on the matter of drafting a memorandum of understanding to promote joint action and reinforce complementarities so as to take advantage of the emphasis on implementation in its programme of work.

35. The United Nations Environment Programme had identified five priority areas of activity that remained unchanged, namely (1) environmental information, assessment and early warning; (2) improvement of coordination between environmental conventions and drafting of environmental policy instruments; (3) freshwater; (4) technology transfer and industry; (5) aid to Africa. The Council also attached special importance in its work to the implementation of recommendations on international environmental governance adopted by the participants in the Johannesburg Summit. The Council had adopted 24 decisions on the following subjects: early warning, assessment and monitoring, particularly strengthening the scientific base of UNEP and global assessment of the state of the marine environment; water, including the regional seas programme and a number of issues relating to oceans; chemicals, including persistent organic pollutants and strategic approach to international chemicals management;

promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns; and governance and law.

36. The key focus of preparations for the Council's session and the follow up to its decisions could be characterized as "environment at the service of development". Indeed, the work of UNEP was guided by its awareness of an undeniable truth: a reasonable environmental protection policy and a well-managed resource base were key to a long-term development strategy with the parallel aim of eliminating poverty.

37. The Second Committee had an ambitious goal: to find solutions to the complex problems of the world economy. It must be borne in mind, however, that in order for actions designed to promote development to be effective, the available financial resources must be used wisely and the recommendations and decisions of recent United Nations-sponsored conferences must be implemented in coordinated fashion. In that regard, the linkage between environment and poverty would be a key factor to bear in mind, and the search for solutions to ecological problems would call for more sustained efforts and attention when formulating strategies to combat poverty. With regard to the global authority for environmental issues, UNEP was prepared to play a major role in the process and would work to ensure that the ecological dimension of sustainable development was borne in mind.

38. During the current session, the General Assembly would elect 28 new members of the Governing Council of UNEP, who would attend the upcoming special session of the Council in March 2004. That session would contribute to the body of information on environmental issues, in preparation for the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The special session would be focused especially on water (assessment of water resources, changing unsustainable consumption patterns and management capacity), but other issues would also be addressed, including certain aspects of international environmental governance, launching a pilot phase for a voluntary indicative scale of contributions, strengthening the scientific base of UNEP and capacity building and technology transfer.

39. **Ms. Schmidt** (Director, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States), introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/58/158). She said that to bring to the attention of the international community the work that was being carried out by the United Nations system, the Office of the High Representative had organized in May 2003 the Third Open Forum for Partnership and had invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention to acquaint all the stakeholders of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 with the programmes and activities going on in the least developed countries.

40. The Secretary-General's report highlighted the overarching relationship between combating desertification and eradicating poverty. The fact that poverty particularly was acute in rural dry lands of least developed countries further reaffirmed the importance of the Convention, which promoted a new approach to the management of ecosystems in arid lands. It was also a well-known fact that more than 75 per cent of the LDC labour force was engaged in the agricultural sector.

41. The Brussels Programme of Action, in recognizing the pertinent role of the Convention, set forth goals and targets to be pursued by least developed countries and their development partners. In particular, measures to conserve soil fertility and forestry and rehabilitate marginal lands were underlined. The Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, held in Cotonou in August 2002, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development had recognized the linkages between poverty, the environment and the special needs of LDCs.

42. While there was a growing recognition and need to implement the Convention as one of the means of poverty eradication and hunger elimination, mobilizing the required resources to implement national programmes of action remained a significant hurdle for the LDCs. As such, it was important for the development partners to take tangible actions to assist those countries.

43. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had approved programmes to assist LDCs in preparing national adaptation programmes of action to address the immediate issues relating to climate change. In 2002, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) had

organized a consultation, with the participation of LDCs, on expedited GEF guidelines for those programmes. Individual country efforts were ongoing and were supported by a special LDC Trust Fund on Climate Change. To access those funds, a number of countries had elaborated proposals for developing their national adaptation programme of action with support from GEF, through UNDP and UNEP.

44. In conclusion, she said that the Office of the High Representative would like to reiterate that while the implementation of the Convention should embark on projects to reclaim desert areas, equal emphasis should be given to efforts to reduce the degradation of productive land, which called for improvements in the legal and institutional environment.

45. **The Chairman** invited delegations who had questions for the representatives of the Secretariat to take the floor.

46. **Mr. Ashe** (Antigua and Barbuda), addressing the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, said he would like to know if the developing countries could expect the Clean Development Mechanism she had mentioned to offer advantages in the energy sector and if that question would be on the agenda of the next Conference of the Parties. He asked for information on the composition of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, since it was extremely important that the least developed countries should be able to present their problems and propose solutions. Since the Russian Federation had not yet stated whether it would adhere to the Kyoto Protocol, he would like to know if the Executive Secretary had any idea when the Protocol might enter into force. He would also like to ask the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide further information on the Joint Liaison Group mentioned by him and by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In particular, he would like to know if the work of the Group would have any real impact in the individual States Parties.

47. He asked the Deputy Chief of the Energy and Transport Branch what measures had been taken by the competent offices of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to support the efforts of small island developing States in the field of energy, bearing in mind that the international meeting on sustainable development for those countries would be held in late 2004.

48. Addressing the Director of the New York Office of the United Nations Environment Programme, he asked how much support had been expressed by countries for the new financing mechanism he had mentioned.

49. **Ms. Waller-Hunter** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) said that the developing countries should certainly expect to benefit from the Clean Development Mechanism, which financed projects aimed at developing new sources of energy, particularly those involving the use of biomass fuel and renewable sources of energy. The Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Business Council for Sustainable Development would organize a meeting in Milan, parallel to the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties, on the important role which the Clean Development Mechanism could play in the energy sector. With regard to the composition of the Expert Group, she said that the least developed countries were amply represented and could make their needs known, but that the contributing countries were also directly involved in its work. Finally, she said she was not in a position to predict a time frame for the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, although she was confident that the Russian Federation would swing the balance in a positive way.

50. **Mr. Zedan** (Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity) explained that the Joint Liaison Group of the secretariats of the three conventions was considering possibilities for joint action in terms of activities and programmes. Thus, the Group had drawn up, in the context of two of the three conventions, a programme of action on arid land which had been submitted to the States Parties for review. The idea was to strengthen cooperation between the national coordination centres of the conventions so as to make the most of the modest resources available and to better coordinate national strategies and plans of action, the goal being to increase synergy. That cooperation would also extend to the drafting of reports so as to avoid duplication.

51. **Mr. Amin** (Director, New York Office, United Nations Environment Programme) said that UNEP could for the first time boast that thanks to the establishment of the voluntary indicative scale of

contributions, around 115 countries were participating in the Global Environment Facility. Eighty-four of the countries that had responded to the UNEP call to pledge to the voluntary indicative scale had committed amounts equal to or higher than the amounts set in the scale; three had made pledges in accordance with the scale but did not support it; nine had accepted their quotas without comment; 14 had expressed reservations and pledged at rates different from those set in the scale, and one country had asked to be excluded from the scale. Consequently, it could be said that overall, the response to the new financing mechanism had been a positive one.

52. **Mr. Shearer** (Deputy Chief, Energy and Transport Branch) said that in order to encourage the use of renewable sources of energy, the Energy and Transport Branch had launched small-scale technical cooperation projects in the small island developing States; those projects were financed inter alia by funds provided by the Italian Government. In order to extend the programme, the Energy and Transport Branch and the Group of Small Island Developing States were currently considering other projects and exploring new technologies that could be adapted to individual countries.

53. **Mr. Moeini Meybodi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), addressing the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, said that he did not understand the relationship that had been made, in connection with the adaptation or protection strategies envisaged, between climatic risk reduction and disaster reduction. Climate change strategies had to do with phenomena caused by human activity, whereas disaster reduction had to do with natural phenomena.

54. **Ms. Moulin-Valdès** (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat) said that climate change and extreme weather events had natural causes, but their causes or their effects were still linked to human activity, habitat choices, construction methods and behaviour. The relationship between climate change adaptation strategies and disaster reduction strategies lay in the fact that the occurrence of natural phenomena was often determined by the choices and responses of governments and people. That explained the need for close cooperation among all parties involved in both areas.

55. **Ms. Waller-Hunter** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) said that she realized it was difficult if not impossible to establish a strict relationship between disasters and climate change. However, studies conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change clearly showed that owing to the presence of atmospheric greenhouse gases, extreme weather events were likely to increase. That was why action taken in the context of the Framework Convention on Climate Change stressed adaptation. The goal was to ensure that countries would use the guidelines drawn up in the context of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in setting their own national adaptation strategies. From that standpoint, cooperation would clearly be advantageous.

56. **Mr. Arrouchi** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that environmental degradation and increasing poverty were the most serious obstacles to the sustainable development of countries. He pointed out that after the entry into force of the Convention to Combat Desertification, millions of hectares of land were still being lost, and thousands of people were dying of starvation. Despite the international community's repeated commitments, in texts and programmes laying down the major orientations for sustainable development, progress in achieving the objectives was too slow. Long-term strategies were needed to translate commitments into actions.

57. The United Nations Environment Programme should adopt a pragmatic work programme and give priority to capacity building in developing countries. In order to succeed in its programme of work, it must have adequate, reliable and predictable resources, and countries that had pledged to the Global Environment Facility should pay their quotas on time. Referring to the environmental degradation in the occupied Palestinian territories, he urged the international community to support efforts to reconstruct the infrastructure and restore the environment.

58. On the question of new and renewable sources of energy, he stressed the need to give the developing countries the human and financial resources they needed to implement the World Solar Programme.

59. The problem of desertification had worsened despite all efforts to combat it. Observation methods must be developed so as to gain an understanding of desertification and combat the phenomenon with determination throughout the world.

60. The Group of 77 and China reaffirmed that States had the sovereign right to exploit their own biological resources. Additional financial resources must be devoted to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the developing countries, and mechanisms must be developed for the sharing of know-how and traditional practices. The Parties to the Convention must take the necessary steps to facilitate the negotiation of an international regime for the equitable sharing of the benefits of the exploitation of biological resources.

61. The Group of 77 and China trusted that cooperation between the secretariats of the three conventions would help strengthen synergies.

62. The Group of 77 and China supported the recommendation that Member States and international organizations should ensure that development plans and poverty reduction strategies included disaster risk assessment as an integral component. They invited the international community and donors to help the developing countries to prevent, manage and assess disasters that hindered their development.

63. The Group of 77 and China took note of the progress that had been made, on the occasion of the International Year of Mountains, in regard to sustainable mountain development. They hoped that other initiatives would be undertaken as well, so as to allow for a better understanding of the significant role that mountains played in people's lives.

64. **Mr. Bernardini** (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries and Romania, said that the global sustainable development strategy of the European Union was based on three key objectives: poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development. There was no question that progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals had been slower than expected, and efforts to that end must be intensified.

65. Climate change was a major challenge that needed to be addressed. It was essential that the Kyoto Protocol should enter into force as soon as possible. Through international cooperation in the fields of science and technology, innovative and sustainable technologies must be developed so as to ensure that every country had the capacity to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change. The small island developing States were faced with special problems, and the Union noted with satisfaction the efforts being made to implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

66. The second major problem was poverty eradication, a problem that was related to the integrity of ecosystems. Poverty eradication strategies should be geared both to reducing carbon dioxide emissions and to providing viable energy services and resources, particularly through the increased use of locally available renewable sources of energy.

67. Another major problem was the rapid rate of biodiversity loss. The European Union welcomed the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The European Union was also pleased with the positive outcome of the sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Strategic plans for mountain development should be adopted, bearing in mind their significant economic potential. The growing support of the international community for goals pertaining to human settlements was also a positive development.

68. The European Union welcomed the concrete measures that had been taken by the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and the different partnerships that had been established, including the World Solar Programme. The European Union would also like to see a strengthening of international environmental governance, which could help enhance the status of UNEP.

69. **Mr. MacKay** (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, said that the members of the Forum had common objectives, given the vulnerability of the region to the harmful effects of climate change. At their annual meeting, the leaders of the Forum countries had stressed the need for measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The member countries had taken steps to mitigate the effect of climate change and to attain the goals of the Kyoto Protocol. Different adaptation options should be identified, especially with regard to extreme weather events, at the regional and national levels, particularly through the Global Environment Facility. The international meeting on the review of the Barbados Programme of Action to be held in 2004 would provide an opportunity to examine the different aspects of climate change. Members of the Forum considered it essential to take into account the special challenges facing small island developing States.

70. **Ms. Wang Ling** (China) said that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol constituted the political basis and the legal framework for addressing the problem of climate change. Governments of all countries should take additional measures to implement the Framework Convention and to expedite the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. China hoped that countries that had not yet ratified the Protocol would do so as soon as possible. Climate change was a worldwide problem; international cooperation was essential, and countries should meet their obligations under the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" and establish effective partnerships. Developed countries should set an example by reducing and limiting greenhouse gas emissions, and they should provide technical and financial assistance to the developing countries in the context of a climate change trust fund.

71. Turning to the issue of new and renewable sources of energy, she said that the promotion and use of technologies based on renewable sources of energy was the key to solving the problems of poverty, climate change, pollution and increased demand for energy. The developed countries should provide financial and technical assistance and specialized know-how to developing countries. China had long recognized the importance of climate change, having ratified the Framework Convention in 1993 and approved the Protocol in 2002. China's energy policy was aimed at guaranteeing energy security for the country and improving efficiency, while protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

72. *In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Zubčević (Croatia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

73. **Mr. Isakov** (Russian Federation) said that in 2002, the Russian Federation had become a full participant in the international cooperation mechanism for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. His Government endorsed the conclusions of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties. It also agreed with the terms of the declaration adopted at the high-level meeting, which stressed the importance of the Convention in protecting the environment and as one of the important tools for eradicating poverty. He stressed the need for better coordination among environmental protection agencies and agencies of the United Nations system.

74. The Russian Federation's environmental policy stressed the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of resources, including genetic resources. Russia also attached great importance to strengthening international cooperation under the Convention on Biological Diversity. His Government was currently considering the matter of adhering to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

75. The outcome of the International Year of Mountains had been quite positive. Follow-up activities should be centred on implementation of the relevant provisions of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

76. The Russian Federation was fully aware of the pressing need to promote the use of new and renewable sources of energy, bearing in mind the situation of each Member State. It supported the proposal to convene an international conference on the subject, to be held in Bonn in June 2004, and was prepared to participate in that effort. Appropriate provisions had been included in the federal programme on production of efficient energy for the periods 2002–2005 and 2005–2010; the goal was that by 2020, renewable energy should account for 10 per cent of the energy supply in several regions of Russia. His Government also supported the World Solar Programme and related activities to be carried out under the sponsorship of UNESCO.

77. The Russian Federation reaffirmed its commitment to protecting the global climate and attached great importance to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The World Climate Change Conference held recently in Moscow, during which President Putin had reported that Russia had reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 32 per cent over the last ten years, represented an important contribution to multilateral action in that area. The matter of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol was currently under study.

78. The Russian Federation supported the activities of the inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction. In that regard, efforts should be concentrated on implementing early warning systems and capacity building. Member States would find useful information on the matter in the report of the Secretary-General on Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

(A/58/277). Russia also supported the Japanese proposal to convene the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction in early 2005.

79. **Mr. Doig** (Peru), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said it was essential to increase the use of renewable energy throughout the world, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Group welcomed the positive trend noted in the report of the Secretary-General and would make every effort to diversify and expand the use of renewable energy, particularly in the context of the World Solar Programme. Significant obstacles remained, especially the lack of financial resources and the problem of access to technology. Regional and international cooperation should be increased with a view to developing energy policies and infrastructures based on the sustainable use of renewable sources of energy.

80. There had been an increase in the intensity and frequency of natural disasters and extreme weather events, including the melting of glaciers, an increase in hurricanes and cyclones and the El Niño phenomenon, all of which caused great concern for many countries. The international community must take into account the vulnerability of certain countries to climate change. The countries belonging to the Rio Group were determined to attain the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and hoped the Kyoto Protocol would enter into force very soon.

81. The members of the Rio Group attached special importance to the protection of biological diversity, especially genetic resources. Thus, they welcomed the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The right of indigenous communities to their natural and biological resources, including genetic resources, and to their traditional know-how must be protected and respected.

82. The conservation of mountain ecosystems was one of the main challenges that must be faced in connection with the follow up to the International Year of Mountains in 2002. What was needed was a long-term political commitment, reflected in a sustainable development strategy for mountain ecosystems.

83. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that her delegation endorsed the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Rio Group.

84. The Government and the people of Brazil attached great importance to environmental issues, given that Brazil had a wealth of natural resources and planned to pursue a rational course of development. Brazil was proud to have hosted the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, which had given the international community a frame of reference for sustainable development. The consensus forged at Rio had been consolidated by a number of important agreements and by the decisions adopted at key world conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations. In 2002, at Johannesburg, the heads of State and Government had reaffirmed the validity of the conclusions of the Rio Conference and had set additional objectives for enhancing implementation.

85. Further efforts were needed in several areas, including renewable sources of energy, to which Brazil attached high priority. Renewable energies represented a substantial share of its total energy production and still had the potential for further development. Brazil had successfully developed its own technology for using ethanol as a fuel. In addition, it would host the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean on Renewable Energies, to be held in Brasilia on 29 and 30 October 2003.

86. Brazil, which itself had been seriously affected by the problems of drought and soil degradation, attached great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Her delegation stressed the need for adequate and predictable financing for activities carried out under the Convention and noted with satisfaction that soil degradation had been designated as a new field of action by the Global Environment Facility. She urged the international community to strengthen cooperation and use all necessary means to combat desertification.

87. Brazil, which had within its territory around 22 per cent of all known species on earth, was playing an active role in international programmes aimed at attaining the three goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity, namely, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Her Government noted with concern, however, that there was a lack of balance in participation at meetings and activities in that area. No matter how important the conclusions and recommendations of those meetings were, they did not reflect an intergovernmental consensus. It was

therefore important to increase the participation of the developing countries in such meetings. Brazil urged the international community to implement the decision on the negotiation of an international regime to promote the sharing of benefits. Such negotiations should make it possible to achieve a balance that was sadly lacking among the three objectives of the Convention.

88. Turning to the question of natural disasters, she said that special emphasis should be placed on disaster reduction, including through training, information networks and weather services, for which additional resources and increased technical cooperation were needed. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the offer made by the Japanese Government to host a World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

89. Brazil remained true to its commitments concerning global climate protection. It had ratified the Kyoto Protocol and would continue to do everything in its power to participate in concerted action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on the basis of common but differentiated responsibility.

90. The assistance of developed countries was essential to ensure sustainable development throughout the world. Brazil urged those countries to keep their promises to mobilize financial resources, facilitate the transfer of ecologically sound technologies, support capacity building and open up their markets to products from developing countries.

91. **Ms. Villalobos** (Venezuela) said that her country attached high priority to protecting the environment and natural resources, but considered the fight against poverty to be even more important if development was to have a human face. Environmental issues were taken into account in her country's development plans and in its Constitution, which devoted an entire title to the right and the duty of every generation to protect the environment. The mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme should be strengthened, financial support should be provided for implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, international cooperation – technical, scientific and financial – should be increased, and the necessary measures should be taken to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss and to help vulnerable developing countries adapt to climate change. Sustainable development depended on the joint efforts of the entire international community, the availability of adequate financial resources, the transfer of technologies and the strengthening of national capacities.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.